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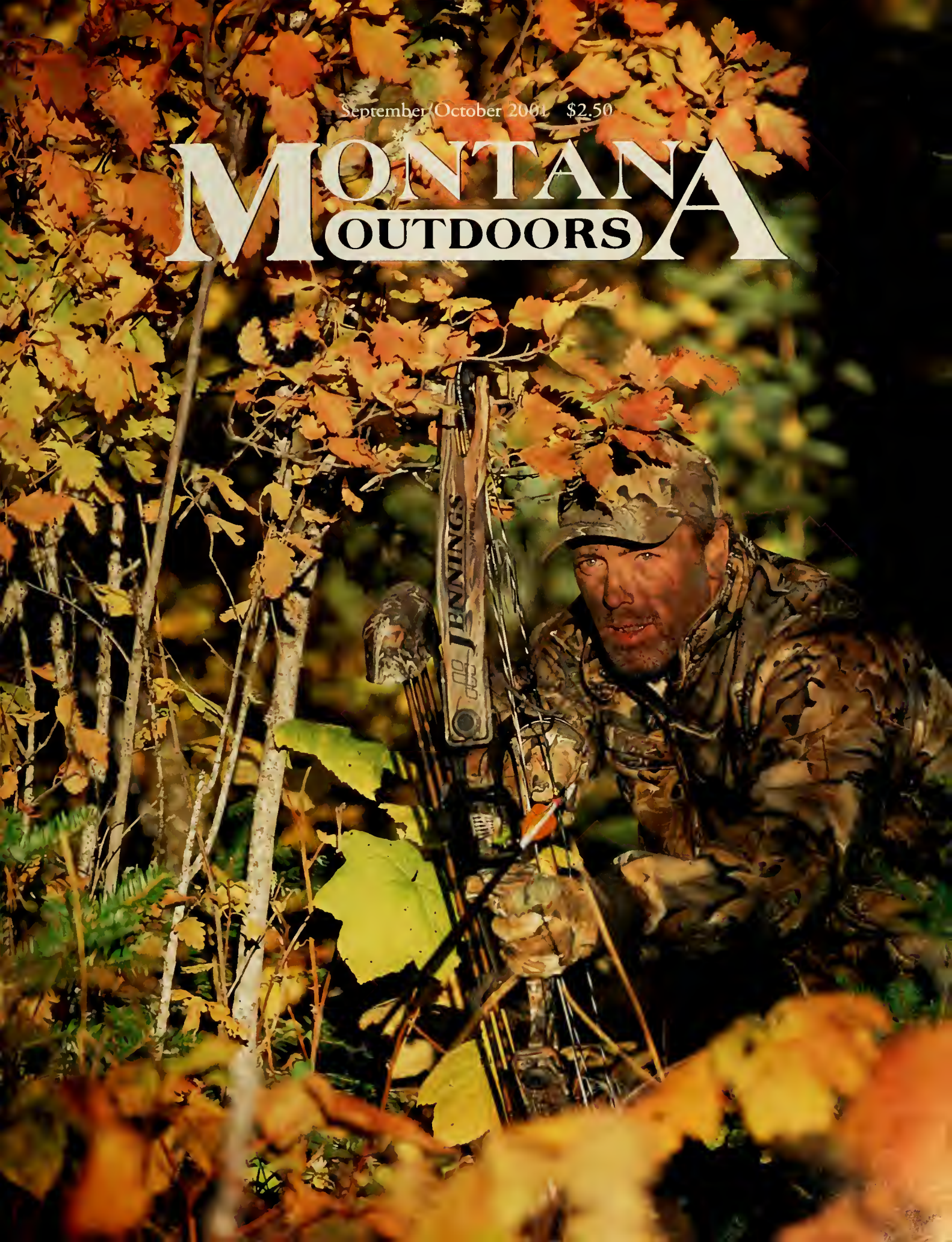
MONTANA OUTDOORS



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1901 2001
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Our Point of View

Fall is a glorious time of year in Montana. Leaves are turning color, the days are cooler, and birds and animals are on the move. Pronghorn bucks are patrolling their territories out on the prairie. Migratory birds are gathering for the journey south. High-pitched bugles ring across mountains, foothills, and prairie breaks as bull elk defend their harems.

For almost half of Montana's residents, fall means hunting season. This issue of *Montana Outdoors* features articles that illusttate our hunting tradition and its importance to so many of us. These stories reflect a Montana landscape blessed with hunting opportunities for virtually everyone—opportunities that are the result of 100 years of wildlife conservation efforts spearheaded by FWP employees, hunters, anglers, and our landowner partners.

Healthy wildlife populations require productive habitat achieved through sound resource management. Because a high percentage of wildlife habitat in Montana is on private lands, FWP is dedicated to working with landowners to provide quality habitat and to enhance hunting and fishing opportunities.

Our best hunters make a point of acknowledging the landowner's contributions. Whether it's a simple "thank you" note, spending time getting to know the landowner outside of hunting season, or offering to help with ranch chores, savvy hunters know that showing their appreciation can go a long way toward being welcomed back again. They also know that demonstrating their awareness of potential problems—the spread of weeds, fire danger, and disruption of livestock—will help allay landowner concerns.

On the other side of the fence, landowners who acknowledge that hunters can play an important role in reducing crop damage by keeping game herds in check are helping their own cause. Growing numbers of landowners are providing access through FWP's Block Management Program, which has opened more than 8 million acres of private land to public hunting. Many landowners also receive assistance in improving their lands for wildlife through FWP's waterfowl and upland game bird habitat enhancement programs. Hunters help fund these programs and the majority of all FWP wildlife programs.

A well-informed hunter is a true asset to good game management. Anyone, of any age, who has an interest in hunting—whether it is to actually become a hunter or simply to learn more about the sport—is encouraged to attend a hunter education course. Contact your nearest FWP office to find out when the next course will be offered in your area, or visit FWP's Web site at fwp.state.mt.us to explore our new, interactive hunter education offerings. Please feel free to contact any FWP office if you have questions regarding this or any other FWP program.

Good luck this fall in adding fond memories that will last well into the future.

M. Jeff Hagener

M. Jeff Hagener
Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Survivor

by Bruce Auchly

Pick a season or a habitat type and George Golie can tell you what ring-necked pheasants are up to.

Summer? Hens sticking close to their nests and chicks. Winter? Dozens and dozens of birds flocking to stubble fields for waste grain. The federal Conservation Reserve Program?

"Where there's CRP, there's birds," Golie says.

For 16 years, Golie has piloted a road grader for the Cascade County Road Department. He's also a representative in the Montana Legislature and has sponsored legislation affecting pheasant hunting, but more on that later. Perched atop his Caterpillar grader, whether he's plowing snow or smoothing gravel over washboard roads, Golie sees pheasant habitat, spring breeding behavior, predators, snowstorms. Golie probably sees more ring-necked pheasants in a year than most hunters, and some wildlife biologists, see in a lifetime.

He also sees meadowlarks, school buses, deer, trash, antelope, and rural mail carriers. It is the pheasant, however, that makes the bird hunter's heartbeat quicken, blood pressure rise, and wallet open.

"There's not much wrong with pheasants," Golie says. Most hunters agree. The state's pheasant harvest zoomed from 54,231 in 1985 to 138,612 in 1995; no other Montana game bird comes close to this level of harvest. So the spotlight shines on Montana's ring-necked pheasants.

Pheasants are the most successfully introduced game species on this continent. They came from a variety of countries and sources—among the 30 or more subspecies worldwide are English black-necked pheasants, Chinese pheasants, Mongolian pheasants, even Japanese green pheasants—but the birds are all native to the semiarid prairies and steppes of the Middle East and Asia. The English birds, by the way, got to that country on the ships of Julius Caesar.

In this hemisphere, pheasant releases started in New York in 1733. The first generally successful release took place in Oregon in 1881. Montanans began trying to plant birds sometime in the late 19th century. However, it took the advent of irrigation and the cultivation of small grains like wheat and barley before the population grew to a huntable size. Montana's first hunting season took place in 1928.

Pheasant populations in Montana do best where the climate, geography, and agricultural practices are similar to those of their native region: dry grassland interspersed with water sources and small grain crops. The rise and fall and rise of pheasants have followed Montana's changing habitat. Before European settlement, the state had little to offer exotic birds. The homestead era, with its small, diversified farms and primitive farming equipment, increased pheasant habitat while generally decreasing habitat of native prairie game birds like sage and sharp-tailed grouse. By the 1970s, however, modern agricultural practices and machinery took away many of those gains, removing cover and food sources. Then came the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which took fields out of production and helped many wildlife species, including pheasants.

Where there's habitat there are pheasants, and Golie's route north and south of Great Falls has habitat. As a result, Golie's job gives him a seasonal front row seat.

"In the spring, you don't see two roosters unless one is running the other off," he says. Each spring male pheasants select a breeding territory. Older birds get the choicer sites, which they have to defend against younger males. When a young interloper shows up, fights occur that would do a Roman gladiator proud. Each bird uses his beak, wings, and spurs on the lower legs to vanquish his foe. Usually, the novice loses.

A word here about young versus old, novice against veteran. A pheasant's life is measured in months, not years. On average, only 30 percent of the birds hatched in any year are alive 12 months later. That has nothing to do with the pheasant being a game bird; a similar fate awaits many songbirds, like chickadees and bluebirds. Inclement weather, predators, accidents, and diseases make up the vagaries of a bird's life.

A 3- or 4-year-old bird is like a 90-year-old human, and there's not too many of us around. A complete pheasant population turnover takes place within five years, according to *Montana's Ring-necked Pheasant*, an FWP publication written by John Weigand and Reuel Janson. Published in 1976 and now out of print, it's still known as the bible to wildlife biologists.

After defeating his competitor, the male pheasant begins advertising for females. Although males are capable of breeding in February and hens could lay eggs in March, Montana's winter weather delays most mating attempts until April and May. Males attract females by crowing every two to three minutes. When the peak of crowing takes place in mid-May, wildlife biologists are able to estimate pheasant populations. A biologist performs a crowing count by driving a prescribed route at dawn, stopping every mile to count the numbers of males crowing during a two-minute interval.

Based on 21 years of conducting counts around Conrad, for example, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) wildlife biologist Gary Olson is able to say this fall will probably not be as good for pheasant hunters as last year. "There's a correlation," Olson says, "between the number of calls per stop and the number of birds available for hunters in the fall."

Spring roadside listening is the only

DALE C. SPARTAS

Pheasants Forever, a national conservation organization dedicated to providing pheasant habitat, has numerous Montana chapters.

pheasant counting Olson and most biologists do. "If there's any predictability to our bird seasons," Olson says, "that's the only tool I know we can use."

In 1980, when Olson started with FWP in Conrad, he established new crowing routes. "I decided not to redo ones from the 1950s because land practices had changed so much [for the worse] that redoing those wouldn't be practical."

For wildlife, the land practices that came out of CRP in the mid-1980s are for the better, Olson says. When CRP began in 1986, the federal government paid farmers to take marginal agricultural land out of production to raise grain prices and stop soil erosion, both from wind and water. Fields could be planted to nearly any type of perennial cover. Nationally, CRP cover varies from hardwood trees to grasses. Because of low price and availability, crested wheatgrass was the most popular in Montana, but stands of pubescent, intermediate, and tall wheatgrasses mixed with alfalfa were also common. By the early 1990s, many species of birds and animals began increasing in CRP areas. The taller, denser grass provided substantial cover, while the alfalfa component provided food for deer and antelope. Also, runoff from these fields was substantially cleaner than from areas annually tilled.

Subsequent CRP sign-ups have focused more on wildlife benefits and water quality. Soil erosion is still a major factor, but wildlife habitat issues take precedence. Farmers now have to bid their fields on a point system—the higher the points the better the chance of enrolling in the conservation program. Points are given for using seed mixtures beneficial to wildlife, such as those that help restore wetland hydrology, provide nesting and sheltering cover, and restore rare and declining native grassland. Additional points are given for establishing food plots.

CRP fields must also be maintained. Methods include mowing, burning, and light tillage, all of which stimulate new growth and make the field habitable for wildlife. "Without manipulating CRP at least once every five or six years," Olson says, "it essentially takes away 95 percent of the use by birds."

The state has its own habitat plan, the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program. Formed in 1989 from a pheasant-raising program, the FWP program combines paying people to raise and release pheasants with developing, enhancing, and conserving upland game bird habitat. The pheasant release part has become a minor component for two reasons: economics and biology. From 1989 through 2000, FWP paid $277,812 for the release of 92,482 pheasants. The 1999 Legislature limited the amount FWP can spend on pheasant releases to $30,000.

The 2001 Legislature looked at the program again and made a few changes. In one change, FWP was told to earmark 15 percent of the approximately $700,000 raised from the annual sale of upland bird licenses and use it for the release of upland birds, like pheasants and wild turkeys. Of that $105,000 or so, FWP must spend 25 percent annually.

The biological argument has long been that pen-raised birds just don't add much to the hunter's take. In 1998, hunters at release sites in Sheridan and Daniels counties were asked to return bands from birds taken. Of 1,641 birds released that summer, hunters in the fall returned one band; another 24 percent of the bands, or 390, were recovered from birds found near the release site dead from natural mortality.

That may be an extreme example, but several biological studies have indicated hunters harvest about 11 percent

Where there's habitat, there are pheasants. Dense vegetation for nesting and woody cover for protection during winter are critical components.

JIM HEUSTESS

of planted birds, says John McCarthy, special projects coordinator with FWP's Wildlife Division. "The closer you plant to opening day, the higher the return," McCarthy says. Current practices allow pen-raised birds to be released in early August—two months before Montana's October pheasant opener. "Sixty percent of birds put out are lost in the first couple of weeks," McCarthy says.

Planting of birds does have its place, McCarthy adds. If disease or weather devastates a local pheasant population, trapping and transplanting wild birds would be a viable biological option. However, the costs of catching and releasing enough birds to make a difference would be astronomical, he says.

The larger portion of the upland game bird program involves FWP cost-sharing with landowners on shelterbelts, food plots, nesting cover, and range management systems. The landowner, or cooperator, pays or offers in-kind services of 10 to 15 percent for projects exceeding $20,000 and 25 to 30 percent for those less than $20,000. Statewide, there are about 830 contracts covering almost 450,000 acres. The money goes to habitat projects because pheasants, like most wild animals, succeed when they have good habitat. "It seems like the more shelterbelts the more birds," Golie says.

By the end of May, hens are sitting on their nests, which typically contain 9 to 12 eggs. A hen will lay an egg a day until the clutch is complete. Then she incubates the eggs for 23 days. Hatching peaks in mid-June. In early summer, as he blades rural roads, Golie says he often will see evidence of a nest nearby. "When I pass by, the hen will run off, but not too far. Then she'll return."

Because pheasants prefer open spaces mixed with undisturbed cover, nearly three-quarters of pheasant nests are found within 15 feet of field edges. Hens will nest almost anywhere. Roadsides, however, make ideal nesting sites. If her nest is destroyed, a hen will renest, even repeatedly, until the eggs successfully hatch. But once the eggs hatch that's it. Pheasants do not raise more than one brood a year.

A bird's life is not a life of luxury for young pheasants. Many are hatched but few are chosen for adulthood. Nine weeks after hatching, mortality can reach 50 percent. Weather, predators, road traffic, farming operations, and disease all take a toll. Male pheasants, however, do have a relatively easy life. After mating they have no family duties; they spend the summer shedding and regrowing their feathers—a process called molting—and replenishing their body reserves.

When the chicks reach adult size they go off on their own. If nesting and hatching occurred normally, this will take place by late August or September. If a hen had to renest, broods may still be found together in October. Because of their late start, these birds have a much smaller chance of surviving the oncoming winter.

Pheasant hunting in Montana doesn't start until October. Only male pheasants may be taken by hunters, and young males don't get their distinctive colors until at least early October and more commonly the middle of the month. Opening the season much earlier than mid-October means a greater percentage of hens are shot, mistaken for young roosters. Depending on the success of an early hatch, Golie sees the change in young males as summer comes to an end. "You can really tell the young roosters in the fall," Golie says. "They don't have as much color yet."

Pheasants have become "the" bird to hunt in Montana. Sales of Montana resident bird hunting licenses have risen from 16,326 in 1994 to 22,268 in 1999. That's nearly a 27 percent increase. It's also slightly deceiving because it doesn't take into account the more than 50,000 residents—62 and older, between 12 and 14 years old, or disabled—who have purchased conservation licenses that permit them to hunt upland birds without an additional bird license.

Nonresident bird license sales also have increased about 33 percent in the same six-year period, to almost 11,000 bird hunters in 1999. Again, these numbers may not tell the entire story, since they don't take into account bird licenses that are included with nonresident combination licenses (17,000 big game, 6,000 deer, and 1,300 elk).

No matter how you add it up, it's easy to see there's a whole lot of bird hunting going on out there. The nonresident growth in particular prompted Representative George Golie to sponsor House Bill 478 in the 1999 Legislature, which raised the price of a nonresident upland bird license from $55 to $110. The extra money helps fund FWP's Block Management Program, which pays landowners to cover the cost of allowing hunter access. HB 478 also gave the FWP Commission the power to cap nonresident license sales. By com-

BRADY & CAREY KOLDEN

Predators like the red fox are often blamed for pheasant declines, but weather and habitat play more important roles.

Since the advent of the federal Conservation Reserve Program in 1985, pheasant hunters have pumped millions of dollars into the eastern Montana economy.

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mission decree, starting in fall of 2002, FWP will sell no more than 11,000 nonresident upland bird licenses. The extra bird licenses attached to the various big game combinations will remain.

Any move to limit nonresident hunters can be controversial. Golie's bill was no exception, but he feels it was right. "I was involved with some sportsmen's groups and local hunters," Golie says. "I decided to introduce the bill after talking with them and seeing some of their figures."

Golie, by the way, does not hunt pheasants. The 47-year-old Great Falls native used to hunt the birds with his dad, but gave it up in the early 1970s when the federal Soil Bank program ended, and land set aside was again farmed, reducing bird habitat. "And it seemed predators were on the rise. I just never got into it again."

Come hunting season, it doesn't matter where the hunter comes from, pheasants that have survived the summer are wary. Sure the bird has eyesight fine enough to spot a seed or insect many feet away, or see a circling hawk high above. But it is the animal's hearing that most hunters overlook. A car door's slam or the click of a closing shotgun action can send pheasants running. On a dry, calm day, a human voice may be all it takes to alert a bird. "They sure are spooky in the fall," Golie says.

Because pheasants spend the fall feeding to build up fat reserves for the winter, hunters who concentrate on the birds' food sources are often successful. That can mean quietly moving into a stubble field at dawn, or spending midday walking slowly through weedy pockets and fencerows.

Time and again, scientific studies show that hunters cannot overharvest rooster pheasant populations if the habitat is good. At some point in the hunting season, the number of birds will drop or the birds will disperse enough that hunter success becomes almost nil. Yet, enough male birds will survive to breed the following spring.

When Montana's pheasant hunting season closes in mid-December, the birds are ready to face the rigors of winter. They need good habitat to survive—marshes, brushy cover, shelterbelts, unmowed railroad rights-of-way, and weedy ditches. "You get a cold day and by a grain field and I've seen 50 pheasants in a bunch," Golie says. "You won't believe there are that many pheasants in the country, but there are."

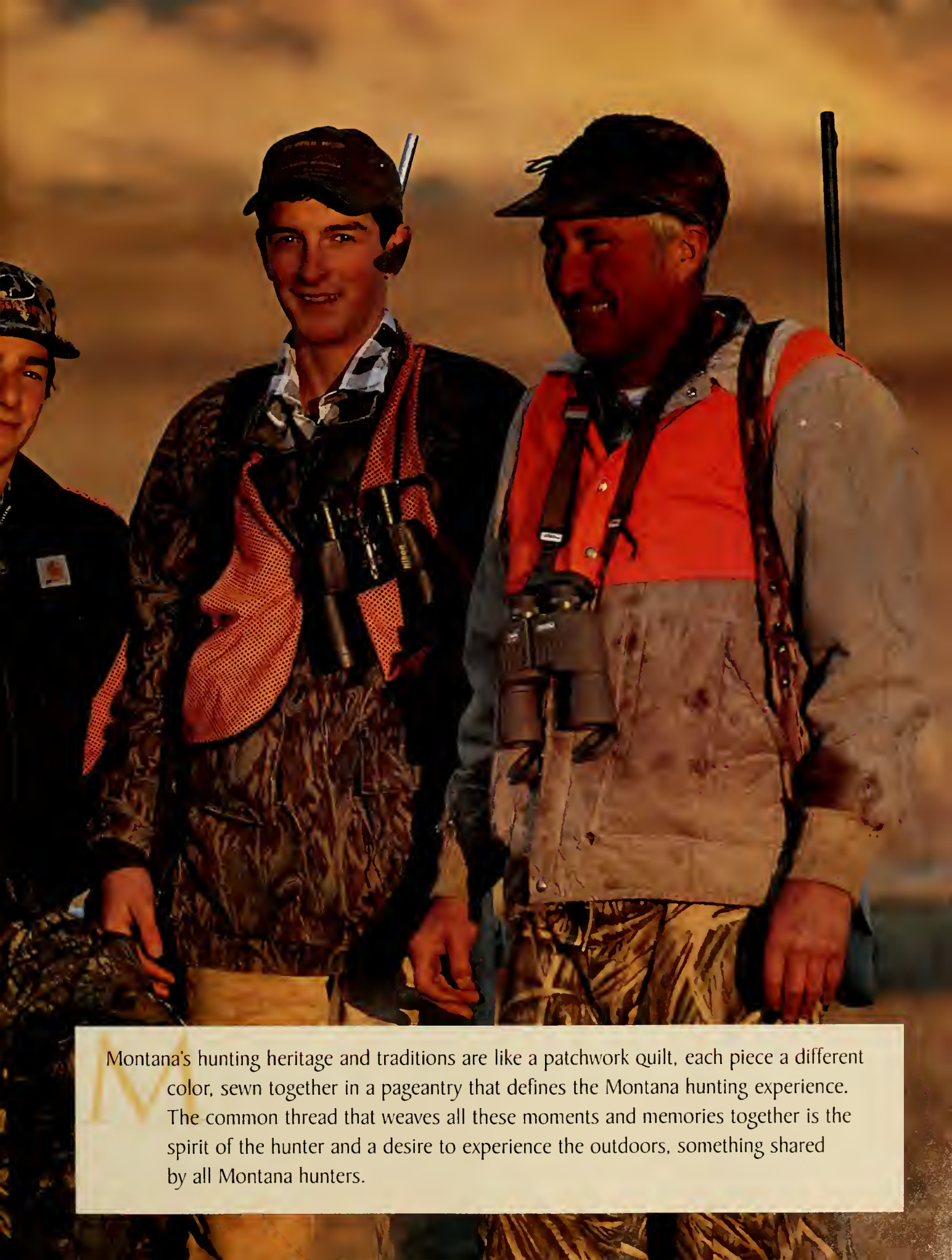
Perhaps the biggest winter threat to a pheasant's survival is blowing snow combined with extremely cold temperatures. With shelter, a pheasant can hunker down in a storm and go without food for long periods, even burrowing into a snowdrift. It's difficult, however, to survive a blizzard without adequate shelter. When caught in the open in a storm, the birds usually turn into the wind to keep snow from getting underneath their feathers. But facing into a blizzard has its own risks, as blowing snow fills their nostrils and mouth and suffocates them. Crusted snow from thawing and refreezing after a "chinook" wind can also entomb a bird.

To Golie the birds seem almost tame in January compared with their wariness in the fall. "When you plow snow off a road they come right out to the road for the gravel and weed seeds," he says.

While not tame, the birds' survival instinct on a winter day probably overrules caution for the moment. By the end of winter, those birds still alive are as good at surviving as any television game show contestant. A tough old bird this Asian import, which may help explain its popularity with hunters or those just driving a country road. ■

A Clan of Many Faces

by Alan Charles



Montana's hunting heritage and traditions are like a patchwork quilt, each piece a different color, sewn together in a pageantry that defines the Montana hunting experience. The common thread that weaves all these moments and memories together is the spirit of the hunter and a desire to experience the outdoors, something shared by all Montana hunters.

DONALD M. JONES

Every person, resident and nonresident, who buys a license to hunt game in Montana is a Montana hunter. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks annually sells more than 510,000 hunting licenses, for all types of game, from turkeys to elk, pheasants to antelope, ducks to moose, and more.

But Montana hunters have many faces, depending upon where they live, what type of tools they use for the hunt, what type of game they hunt, what sort of ethics and traditions and heritage they bring to the hunt, and how committed they are to the hunt itself.

Montana's hunting heritage and traditions are not defined anywhere on a printed page or in historical documents. They are a tapestry woven of many different threads, providing a colorful piece of the Montana way of life that is dear to all who participate. Every Montana hunter, in one way or another, has contributed to that history.

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BEN O WILLIAMS

As I wend my way across the state during hunting season, I often stop and visit with hunters, just to learn who they are, how things are going, what sort of experiences they are having, and what motivates them to hunt in Montana. I find a kaleidoscope of people seeking a multitude of experiences, and I'm constantly impressed with just how large and varied this community of Montana hunters really is. Despite their differences, they have one thing in common: they're having a great time. You can see it in their faces. ■

BEN O WILLIAMS

Making His Mark

story and photos by John Fraley

Hunting has been a family tradition for the Stafford family. For a decade, Charles and his two older sons built an outdoor relationship around their favorite hunting area. On a map of the area, oldest son Steven has penned marks where they've taken 22 deer over the years.

This past hunting season Steven added a very important mark, indicating the spot where young Charlie Stafford shot his first deer and joined the family hunting tradition. Charlie, Charles's youngest son, worked for years toward this accomplishment.

When Charlie was born, doctors predicted he wouldn't live a year because of heart problems and other complications. "The doctor told us he'd be lucky to make it six months, so all we could do is take him home and love him," remembers his mother, Cindy.

"If you would have seen him during the first three years you wouldn't have believed he could make it," says Charles. "We're just thankful that he's here and healthy."

Charlie underwent nine major surgeries. But like many other youngsters with Down's syndrome, Charlie, 14, overcame the challenge and succeeded.

Charlie grew up with hunting and the outdoors. His father and brothers surrounded him with it. When the family went hiking, fishing, and camping, Charlie came along, often packed by his father or brothers. Cindy and the boys worked hard with Charlie to make sure he could succeed in the outdoors. "We just treated him like the other kids," says Cindy. "He's adapted and blended right in."

Charlie learned to rattle antlers to bring in deer and became good at it. "The more he rattled, the better he sounded," says Charles. Charlie learned to hit a stump or tree with the antlers and scratch them in the dirt, as well as banging them together. He became the youngest Stafford to succeed in rattling. On one trip a few years ago he sat by a game trail and rattled determinedly. Thinking nothing was going to come in, Charlie and his dad got up to leave—and then saw a three-by-four-point whitetail buck walking towards them. Charles was able to bag the deer, much to Charlie's delight.

Charlie and his father are both very proud of the deer Charlie took last fall. They hunted together on five separate days, often covering three miles. On one hunt Charles tripped and fell on a snowy hillside. When his dad got up, Charlie was amused to notice that several does were watching them.

On their fifth hunt, Charlie and his dad stalked within 60 yards of a nice, two-point whitetail buck. They were able to get in a good position to try

Against the odds, Charlie Stafford has taken his place in the hunting community.

Accompanied by his father, Charlie proudly displays his hunter education certificate.

a shot. The buck wasn't disturbed, and in fact was still feeding when Charlie squeezed the trigger on the 8mm Mauser. The accurate lung shot downed the deer without damaging any meat.

Charlie was fascinated as the pair field-dressed the deer, examined the entrails, and studied the general anatomy. It was the first time Charlie clearly associated the parts of the deer with the game meat he grew up eating. Charlie is especially proud that he secured the meat for his family, and he enjoys cooking it.

Part of the reason Charlie takes the killing and field dressing of the animal in stride is his rural upbringing. "We've had domestic livestock," says Charles. "Charlie has seen the example of raising animals for food. When it's butcher time, he understands."

Now that the two older Stafford boys have moved on to college and careers, Charles is happy that he will still have a regular hunting buddy. "I was probably more excited than anyone else with Charlie's success," says Charles. "I'm thrilled that Charlie can go out and hunt with me. Now we can still plan those hunts that have been such an important part of our family."

Another key to Charlie's success at hunting has been his involvement in the Hunter Education Program. When his father and older brothers became hunter education instructors, Charlie participated as well. For the past decade, Charlie accompanied his dad and brothers in their classes each spring and fall. He attended as many instructor workshops as most instructors.

This past year, Charlie completed the hunter education class and received his own certification. Charles worked with Charlie throughout the course, spending extra hours helping him study the material at home. Charles went along with Charlie on the field course so they could practice gun handling and other skills. In the end, Charlie completed the course successfully. He was proud to be able to measure up to the standards required for certification just like all of the other students in the program.

After receiving his Hunter Education Certification, Charlie took it a step further. He went through the application process and became certified as an Assistant Hunter Education Instructor.

Charlie is excited about his new role as an assistant instructor. He works with his father by demonstrating shooting positions at the field course. In the classroom, Charlie hands out papers and shares his survival pack with the class. And like most kids, he's more familiar with the operation of a VCR than his father, so he runs the movies.

"Charlie is very serious about the gun safety aspect of the course," says Dale Sommerfield, who was the Kalispell area lead instructor during Charlie's first course as an assistant instructor. "We don't make a big deal out of his participation; he's just one of the instructors. He fits right in."

Charles says that the key to Charlie's success as an assistant instructor is reasonable expectations. "We don't overload him," he says. Charles adds that Charlie was responsible for organizing the instructor supply box for each class day. "Each night when I came home, Charlie was in his uniform and ready to go with the box," Charles says. The students accepted Charlie without a problem. He connected to students well, shaking each student's hand on the first night of class.

The Stafford family hunting tradition will continue this fall. Charles, and sons David, Steven, and Charlie put in together for antelope permits in eastern Montana. They may hunt deer there as well. The boy who was born with a hole in his heart has taken his place in the hunting fraternity.

Way to go, Charlie. ■

the Montana Outdoors CHALLENGE

compiled by Thomas Baumeister and Dave Hagengruber

Are you knowledgeable about Montana plants and animals, their habitat, distribution, and management? How well do you know your hunting and fishing regulations, state parks, and Montana's rich outdoor traditions? If you would like to test your knowledge and learn more about Montana's natural resources, and the wonderful recreational opportunities they provide, then we invite you to take part in the Montana Outdoors Challenge. Here's how it works:

Circle the correct answer for each of the questions below. Next, write the alphabetical letter from your choice in the corresponding box on the entry form. You can find the entry form as a tear-out insert adjacent to page 31. There is only one correct answer for each question. When the entry form is completed, the string of letters will spell out a theme.

Add your address, place postage on the postcard, and return it postmarked no later than November 1, 2001. If your entry is correct, and your name is drawn, you'll win one of the fabulous prizes listed below. The correct answers and a list of winners will be published in a future issue. Good luck!

1st prize: Binoculars (value $180)
2nd prize: Fishing rod, reel, and tackle box (value $120)
3rd prize: Sleeping bag (value $100)
4th through 8th prizes: 2002 Resident Montana State Parks Passport (value $20 each)
9th through 12th prizes: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Centennial T-shirt (value $15 each)
13th through 16th prizes: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Centennial video (value $10 each)
17th through 20th prizes: Montana Outdoors one-year magazine gift subscription (value $9 each)

1

Montana has one of the lowest rates of hunting accidents nationwide. Which of the rules below ensure safe handling of firearms?

JOHN ERALEY

K. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction
X. Treat every gun as if it were loaded
L. Be sure of the target and beyond
A. All of the above

Official Contest Rules

1. Contest entries must be submitted on the original magazine entry form found as a tear-out insert adjacent to page 31. Photocopied entries will not be accepted.
2. One entry per person.
3. Entries must be postmarked no later than November 1, 2001.
4. Winners will be drawn at random from a group of all correct and complete entries.
5. Employees of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and their immediate families are not eligible to participate.
6. Contest winners will be notified by December 1, 2001. For a complete list of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: The Montana Outdoors Challenge, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, P.O. Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701.
7. If you have questions about this contest, write to: The Montana Outdoors Challenge, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, P.O. Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701 or call 406-444-4046.
8. Decision of the contest judges is final.

BACKGROUND PHOTO BY JIM HEUSTESS

2

Hunters must be visible to other hunters to prevent firearm-related accidents. In Montana, big game hunters must wear:

DONALD M. JONES

O. A cap or a hat band with hunter orange
M. 100 square inches of hunter orange
C. 400 square inches of hunter orange above the waist visible at all times

3

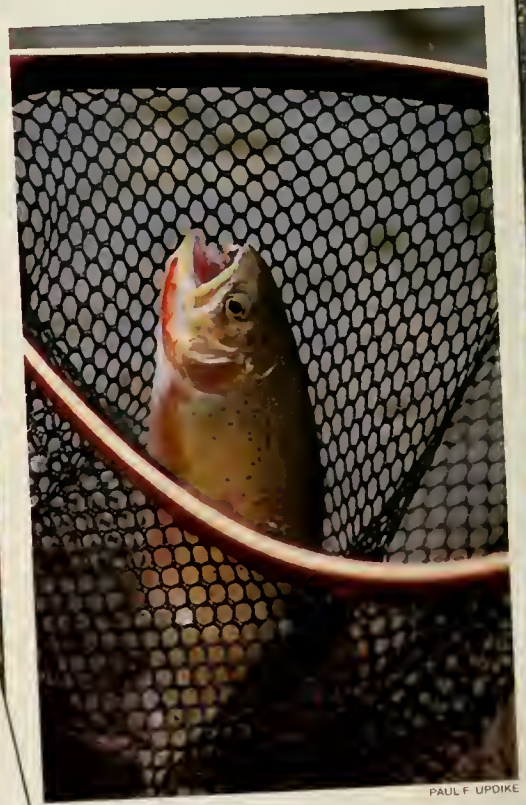
Hunting contributes significantly to Montana's economy. Last year, Montana elk hunters spent an estimated ____ on transportation, lodging, food, guide fees and other purchases, excluding license fees.

BILL MCRAE

P. $10 million
Q. $40 million
E. $80 million

4

Montana is home to 86 species of fish; some are native and some are introduced. Which of the following species is native to Montana?

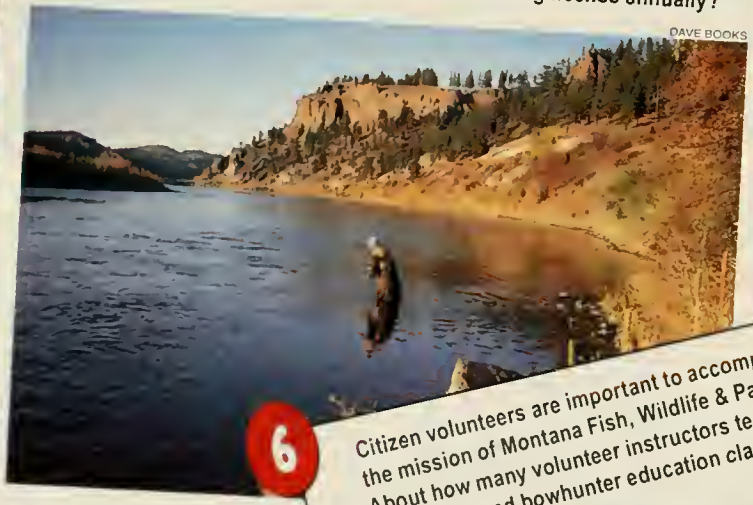


PAUL F. UPDIKE

R. Brown trout
N. Westslope cutthroat trout
R. Rainbow trout

5

Fishing is one of Montana's most popular outdoor activities. What percentage of adult Montanans purchase a fishing license annually?



DAVE BOOKS

S. 5%
L. 15%
T. 35%

6

Citizen volunteers are important to accomplish the mission of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. About how many volunteer instructors teach the 500 hunter and bowhunter education classes in Montana each year?

JOHN FRALEY

A. 100
M. 500
U. 1,500

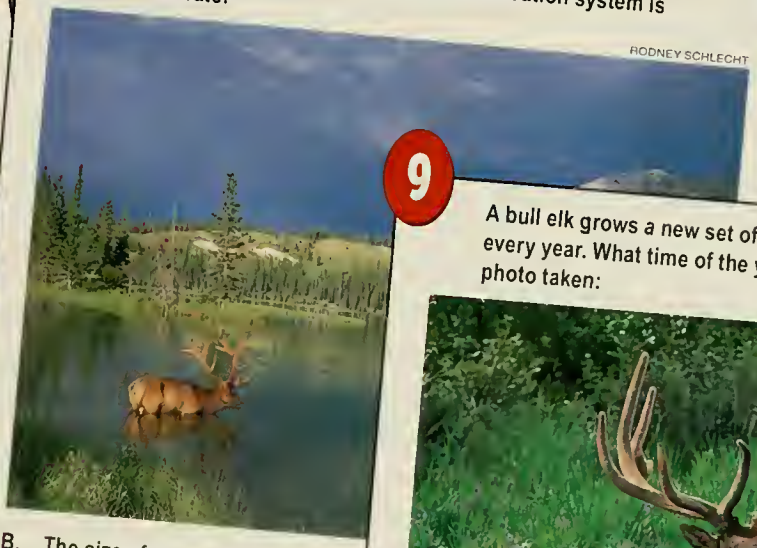
BACKGROUND PHOTO BY DANIEL J. COX

7 Being safe makes for an enjoyable hunting experience. Firearm safety training is required for:

TIMCHRISTIE.COM

V. Youths 12 though 14 years of age
R. Youths 12 through 17 years of ag
A. Hunters of all ages

8 Montana offers some of the finest and wildest country left in North America. A "blue ribbon" classification system is used to rate:


RODNEY SCHLECHT

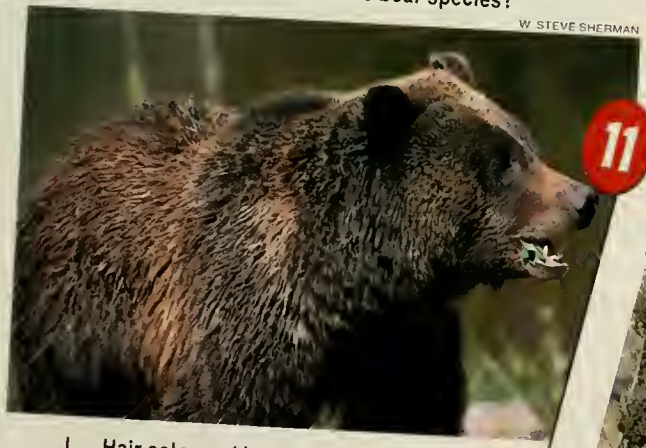
B. The size of an elk antler
Y. The habitat and fisheries value of a stream
N. The productivity of a soil type

9 A bull elk grows a new set of antlers every year. What time of the year was this photo taken:

DONALD M. JONES

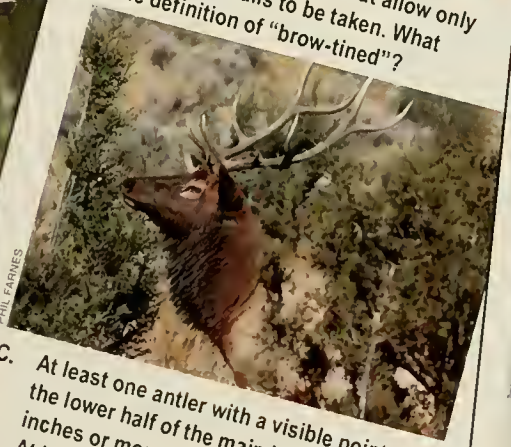
T. March-April
O. July-August
A. September-October

10 It is not always easy to tell the difference between a black bear and a grizzly bear. Which combination of characteristics is most reliable to distinguish between Montana's two native bear species?


W. STEVE SHERMAN

J. Hair color and body size
F. Shoulder hump, shape and size of ears, and facial profile
B. Behavior, diet, and habitat

11 Some elk hunting districts in Montana have special regulations that allow only "brow-tined" bulls to be taken. What is the definition of "brow-tined"?


PHIL FARNES

C. At least one antler with a visible point on the lower half of the main beam that is four inches or more in length
W. At least one antler with two visible points on the lower half of the main beam
K. At least one antler with a visible point on the lower half of the main beam that is 10 inches or more in length

12 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks conserves and manages the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of the state. Originally named the Montana Department of Fish and Game, when was this agency first established?

COURTESY OF THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

O. 1901
W. 1931
S. 1961

13 Montana is home to many species of ducks. Which of the duck species below nests in cavities of trees?

BARBARA THOMAS

N. Wood duck
O. Mallard
A. Northern pintail

14 Many states declare a bird species as the state bird. Montana's state bird is the:

RICHARD MOUSEL/WWW.COLOUROUTDOORS.COM

U. Mountain bluebird
S. Western meadowlark
B. Yellow-rumped warbler

15 Both female and male pronghorn antelope grow new horns every year. If you were watching two antelope that had shed their old horns but had not yet grown new horns, how could you tell if either one of them is a male?

DONALD M. JONES

E. A male has a black cheek patch
L. A male is larger in size than a female
P. A male has a lighter colored rump patch

16 Many lakes and reservoirs are planted with fish to provide recreational fishing opportunities. About how many trout does Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks plant each year?

CRAIG & LIZ LARCOM

X. 1 million
C. 5 million
R. 10 million

17 Five species of mountain and prairie grouse can be hunted in Montana. Which of these lives primarily in mountainous habitats that are dry, sparsely vegetated, and at high elevations?

DONALD M. JONES

A. Sage grouse
W. Sharp-tailed grouse
V. Blue grouse
U. Ruffed grouse
J. Spruce grouse

18 Which of the following species is listed on the federal Endangered Species List as endangered in Montana?

MICHAEL H. FRANCIS

B. Northern pike
A. Whooping crane
K. Pine marten

19 What noxious weed can be found in every county in Montana, covers over 4 million acres statewide, and costs Montanans millions of dollars in land-use loss and management expenses each year?

MICHAEL & PATSY FRIBLEY

T. Spotted knapweed
A. Russian olive
W. Rough fescue

20 Montana is a bird hunter's paradise. Of the game birds found in Montana, which species is exotic—imported from elsewhere?

DENVERBRYAN.COM

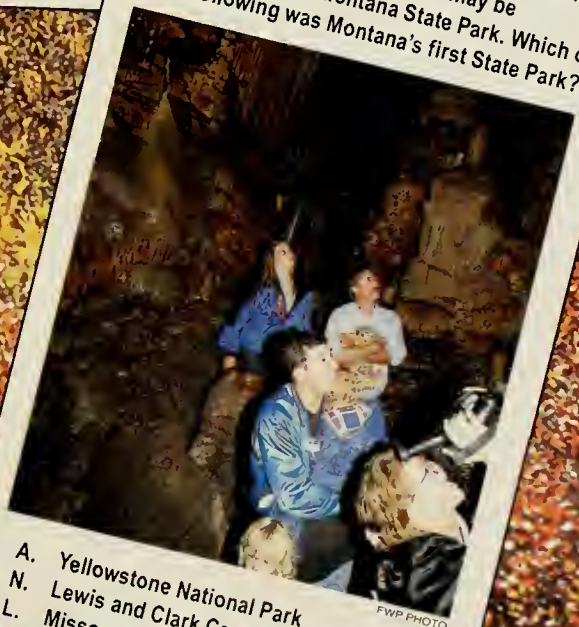
L. Ring-necked pheasant
Y. Hungarian partridge
F. Chukar
I. All of the above

21 About 65% of Montana is privately owned, including some of the most productive wildlife habitats and best hunting areas in the state. In 2000, FWP's Block Management Areas provided hunting opportunities for the public on:

OUSANSMETANA.COM

J. 1 million acres
K. 4 million acres
O. 8 million acres

22 A place of special scenic, historic, scientific, and recreational significance may be designated as a Montana State Park. Which of the following was Montana's first State Park?



FWP PHOTO

A. Yellowstone National Park
N. Lewis and Clark Caverns
L. Missouri Headwaters

BACKGROUND PHOTO BY DANIEL J. COX

Thirty Days Hath

September

by E. Donnall Thomas Jr.

BILL MCRAE

DUSANSMETANA.COM

September! Its thirty days are never enough. If there were any justice, it would have sixty, or a hundred. Here in Montana, upland bird season (exclusive of pheasants) opens on the first of the month. Bowhunting begins the following weekend, as elk and antelope both start to rut. And to render this embarrassment of sporting riches all but unbearable, the creeks are at their best during the first few seductive weeks of fall, when there are still hoppers on the banks and the big browns are starting to stir.

Fish and game aside, the country here is at its most enchanting in September. Cool evenings spread across the prairie to attenuate the torpor of the days. Colors erupt along the hillsides and creek bottoms. Sound seems to travel forever, and I always start to imagine the music of bugling elk on the distant reaches of the wind. It's hard to avoid the notion that I don't really deserve any of this, and in fact I'm pretty sure I don't. That is finally what makes September so exquisitely special. It always arrives like an unexpected pardon just when I need it most.

The afternoon is a real prairie scorcher, but Sonny and I are out in the middle of it anyway. The dog's enthusiasm just will not be restrained, even in weather that suggests the wisdom of restraint. What we are really dealing with here is the power of companionship, a bond that the empty expanse of sage and sky all around us only serves to enforce. After the long, idle summer, Sonny wants to go hunting so badly that I cannot imagine disappointing him. Today, it's me and the dog against the world, and I can feel the camaraderie propelling us out into the shimmering heat against all possible measures of reason. This is the sort of impulse that gets young men killed in times of war, but I can't help myself any more than the dog,

not with bird season at hand at last.

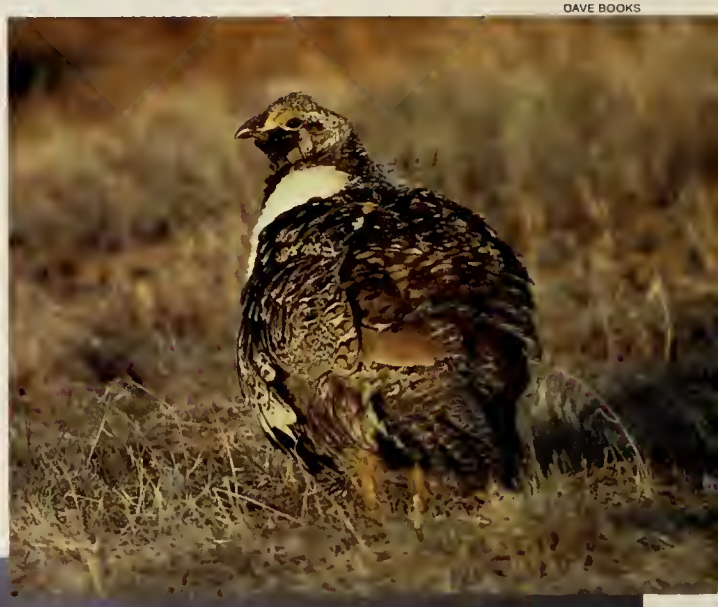
What I really want from the creek bottom is a cooperative covey of young sharptails, the kind that hold for the dog, chatter their way into the sky at conveniently timed intervals, and make you feel like celebrating when they finally come out of the oven moist and full of flavor. The first birds we flush turn out to be sage hens though, and they rise wild to boot, leaving us to mark their route of flight until they disappear into the heat waves shimmering above the prairie.

We set off in that direction, but before we have gone 100 yards, we're into a second covey. The first bird flushes practically underfoot, and its sudden appearance from the sparse cover and its staggering size silhouetted against the sky nearly prove to be its salvation. Then, as I regain my composure and drop the bird, all hell breaks loose. The dog is nosing sage hens from their hiding places until the air is full of them. They are so huge and so close that it does not seem possible to miss any of them, which, of course, makes it all but certain that I will. It doesn't matter; I'm years beyond the point of following my own batting average in the field, and the only witness is the dog.

When the dust finally settles, Sonny has his retrieves and I have my sage hens. This limit comes as a mixed blessing, since turning sage hens into good food requires both effort and imagination. Of course that's what long evenings in the kitchen are meant for, and with the help of a bottle of wine and a few good friends, the job will get done somehow. Anyone can be a good cook when they're starting with teal or walleye or a good cut of venison. It helps to think of the load in the back of my game vest as a chal-

The dog is nosing sage hens from their hiding places until the air is full of them.

DAVE BOOKS



DENVERBRYAN.COM

The frost had brought the first hard blush of autumn to the foliage along the creek and the sudden rush of color felt like a frontal assault upon the senses.

DALE C. SPARTAS

lenge rather than a burden.

Done for the day, Sonny and I climb out of the creek bottom and head for the truck. Bonds have been renewed, promises fulfilled. As hot as the day has grown, it has still left me with the idea that there are few places else on earth I would rather be.

The creek can be a fickle place in September. Low water and bright sun render the trout moody, and when they rise from the depths to feed they often act hysterical. While autumn afternoons on the creek are almost always an aesthetic delight, a long time can pass between fish. The angler with the patience to endure, however, may find the rewards worth the wait.

The road to my house passes over a narrow wooden bridge across the creek, and even though this isn't a favorite stretch of water to fish, the bridge affords an excellent vantage from which to survey the water below for feeding activity. I usually drive back and forth across this bridge several times a day, and the urge to stop and look almost always proves overwhelming, even when I am on my way to something alleged to be important. The neighbors have all grown used to me impeding the flow of traffic across the bridge as I fumble for my Polaroids and stare eagerly into the crystalline depths below. No one ever seems to mind. The first time someone leans on their horn down there I will know for sure that Montana has gone to hell at last.

This September, I shot my antelope the morning after the first hard frost of the year. It was only a young buck, but the arrow had flown perfectly true, crashing through the animal's chest and dropping it stone dead in plain sight. A kill like that will make up for a lot of missing horn. Hot, tired, and grubby after two days out on the prairie, I stopped in town just long enough to leave the antelope at a friend's meat locker, and then I headed for home.

The frost had brought the first hard blush of autumn to the foliage along the creek and the sudden rush of color felt like a frontal assault upon the senses. As soon as I stopped at the mailbox, I could see fish working the current below. I pulled over to the side of the road and walked out on the bridge. Dozens of rainbows were porpoising in

the current, which broke into a complex series of eddies as it tumbled beneath the roadway. I was hot and tired and I smelled of antelope. I thought about driving on up the hill, taking a bath, and eating my first real meal in days, but then I said the hell with it and walked back to the truck for my fly rod.

The fish were taking caddis flies, which seemed straightforward enough, but I could also see that the banks were teeming with hoppers. Intrigued, I plucked a hopper out of the grass beside the road and pitched it off the bridge and into the current. As soon as it struck the water, a half dozen rainbows slashed at it like sharks hitting a wounded fish. After repeating this exercise two more times, I dug a deer hair hopper pattern out of my vest and circled downstream to address the current.

The fishing was basically brainless, like feeding steak to a hungry dog. None of the fish were very big, but none were very small either. They struck wildly every time I served up a drag-free float. The current was complex enough to demand a little bit of technique, but not all that much, and the trout came easily until I decided that I didn't need to catch any more.

By the time I reeled in and climbed back up the bank to the truck, I felt rejuvenated, as if the creek and the fish had freed me of some weighty obligation. I broke the rod down and placed it across the dash where it rides all year in defiance of the laws of probability, waiting for catastrophe to rear its head. The rod obviously leads a charmed life. Days like this make me feel as if I do too.

There is no way for me to deal with September in Montana without having to deal with elk. They are the only animal I have faced with the bow that invariably intimidates me, dangerous game included. When I see a bear on a hillside, I always begin my stalk believing that I'm going to kill it. Usually I don't, but my belief somehow remains unshakable. On the other hand, whenever I see a bull elk, my first response is a wave of existential anguish. No matter how promising the situation appears, I know that I will eventually be undone, whether by wind, terrain, or some random incompetence on my own part.

This is the kind of experience that somehow goes best alone, and I hunt by myself a lot during elk season. Tonight, there is no one in camp with me except the dog, who goes into his customary display of indignity when I kennel him in the back of the truck and set off up the mountain with my bow. The first real cold front of the season is sweeping down from the north, and even in my wool vest I am close to being underdressed. Sitting in a stand is out of the question. I am going to hike up the mountain until I find the elk, even if it kills me. Let's hope that it doesn't.

The ceiling is coming down even faster than I am going up, and within a half-mile of camp I am bogged down in fog and a miserable mixture of rain, snow, and drizzle. The breeze is still in my face, however. That is the one and only element that is absolutely critical to the bowhunter, all the rest being manageable somehow, if only by suppressing conventional notions of creature comfort. Coupled with the quiet stalking conditions underfoot, the steady wind feels as reliable as an old friend.

Just as I crest a little rise, a tawny patch of color appears in the gloom ahead that cannot be anything but part of an elk. I freeze and stare, and soon the form in front of me makes sense. It is a cow elk's rump, and it is less than fifty yards away. Soon a second cow materializes from the weather, and then a third. They are feeding their way slowly across an open park. There are no antlers in sight, but the rut is in full swing, and there is sure to be a bull somewhere near the end of the procession.

I ooze forward toward a little pine tree, moving as slowly as one of the kids on their way to clean the dog kennel. The grass is still standing tall despite the frost earlier in the week, and it's easy to make progress by moving when the cows' heads are down. From the cover of the tree, I watch an entire line of a dozen cows file past between thirty and forty yards away, and it occurs to me that I really ought to shoot one of them. Cows are legal game during Montana's archery elk season, and everyone in the family loves elk on the table. I *know* a bull is going to show up however, the way children know Santa Claus is going to show up, and the strength of this belief makes it impossible to haul off and shoot a cow no matter what her tenderloins might taste like on the grill.

For this is what is known in the trade as a set-up. I have all the wind in my favor, the lead cow grazing unaware of my presence, and a perfect position from which to ambush the bull that will eventually follow his harem down the primrose path in front of me. Bowhunters wait all season for a situation like this. I've waited all season for a situation like this. I can't abandon my hard-earned advantage just for a full freezer.

I fully expect the bull to show up hard on the heels of the last cow, but the herd passes by leaving me waiting like an abandoned bride at the altar. I'm starting to fidget by the time the sound of the first bugle rises through the fog. I will never know exactly why the bull wasn't right where he was supposed to be; perhaps he was distracted by the need to run a smaller bull away from the ladies. The fact remains that I am well-hidden, thirty yards downwind of the object of his desire, and I wouldn't trade places with anyone in the world for love or money. Unless, it was a lot of love or a lot of money.

Then the bull hangs up for reasons that are impossible to define. Perhaps he has heard a challenger behind him on the mountain; perhaps he is just experiencing some kind of cervid midlife crisis. Whatever the case, I am

here and he is still out of sight and out of bow range, and while he is bugling his fool head off, he isn't getting any closer.

I mew like a lonely cow, and he bugles back. I bugle, and he rakes his antlers in the brush. Suddenly, this relationship is going nowhere. At times like this, my first goal is always to avoid spooking the elk, and so I advance cautiously, like a kid exploring for a good-night kiss on a first date. Darkness is settling in all around us now, the kind that doesn't leave any room for compromise. The bull is still carrying on down in the brush, but the light is abandoning me. I squeal through the grunt tube one last time, and that is finally how it ends—not with a bang but a bugle.

DALE C. SPARTAS

When things are going well in the outdoors, it's hard to tell the triumphs from the disappointments. Fish, fowl, or elusive bull elk...ask me which one I'd rather do all over again, and I'd tell you to flip a coin.

Meanwhile, this best of all possible times is coming to a close, its passage tempered by the arrival of things to come. Duck season is at hand, and then there will be pheasants and the whitetail rut. That's the thing about the calendar. The months just keep coming at you.

But there is only one September... until next year. ■

DONALD M. JONES

Then the bull hangs up for
reasons that are impossible to define.
Perhaps he has heard a challenger
behind him on the mountain;
perhaps he is just experiencing some
kind of cervid midlife crisis.

Editor's note.—The preceding story is excerpted from E. Donnall Thomas Jr.'s book To All things a Season, *which chronicles a year's events in the outdoors. Autographed copies of the book are available for $30 plus $2 shipping and handling by writing him at 224 W. Main St., #206, Lewistown, MT 59457 or by calling 406-538-7436. This book and others may also be ordered at his Web site, www.bowsite.com/thomas/*

Catchall

A Rogue Grizzly Inspired FWP's Popular Logo

Have you ever wondered how FWP's bear head logo came into existence?

The story began in 1942, when a rogue grizzly went on a rampage in the Absaroka Mountains north of Yellowstone National Park. According to the late Lloyd McDowell, a biologist with the Montana Fish and Game Department in the 1940s, the bear had broken into several cabins in the area, tearing up windows, doors, and even flooring.

"One cabin known as the Hellroaring cabin had a root cellar under the kitchen floor with a trap door," wrote McDowell years later in a letter to his daughter, Mitzi Stonehocker of Ronan. "Somehow the bear had gotten down through the trap door, but when he decided to leave he just pushed the whole floor up and made a new exit!"

The ongoing destruction of property and food supplies had local biologists and wardens concerned. "In one case," wrote McDowell, "the bear didn't get through the door due to the old crosscut saws we had nailed to protect the door from entry. So this time he climbed on the roof and tore a hole large enough for him to make his entry. To exit he pushed a window out from the inside. He sure knew how to enter and exit a cabin! He did tear up one paw trying to get through this cabin's door and apparently ripped a claw out in the process. There was blood all around. At the time, we talked how we would sure like to find this bear; hunting season was open on grizzlies and from all the damage he was creating we thought we'd like to get a shot at him."

McDowell got his chance on September 15, 1942, as he and a partner headed for their headquarters cabin on Eagle Creek near Gardiner. Here's how he described the encounter to his daughter: "As my partner and I were riding out that day we rounded a curve in the trail about three-fourths of the way up the divide. I was on the lead horse leading a pack horse. Coming down the hill above the trail a huge silvertip bear stopped about 75 feet in front of me. I could see the hairs on his hump as they raised up. I think mine did too! I was riding a horse that didn't like anything around his head so I knew I had to get off him. The bear seemed ready to charge as I hit the ground, taking my .270 rifle from the gun scabbard. I fired and the 130-grain slug entered the bear's shoulder...he let out a loud roar and lunged forward toward me, but rolled sideways off the trail. I quickly reloaded and followed him down the rough mountainside through heavy brush and trees...it took three more shots before I got in a killing one to the base of his skull. With all the racket going on my partner wasn't sure who was winning and was very relieved to have me holler to tie up the string and come help me skin the beast out....we commented on the unusual curved jaw this bear had. We also discovered the missing claw and the paw that was cut. At this time we figured we had the 'rogue bear' that had been doing all the damage in the area."

McDowell had the bear's skull and hide made into a rug-mount by Jonas

MIKE GURNETT

Mitzi Stonehocker of Ronan displays the grizzly that became a colorful part of FWP history.

Brothers Taxidermy. It was hanging on his office wall at Fish and Game headquarters in Helena in 1943 when it caught the eye of department draftsman Hector LaCasse. The agency was looking for an official emblem, so LaCasse made a lifelike drawing of the bear's head. The drawing quickly became the department's logo, appearing on uniform patches, letterheads, vehicle decals, and hunting and fishing licenses. More than half a century later, LaCasse's drawing of the grizzly remains the basis for all current official logos of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

The original mount, which now belongs to McDowell's daughter, Mitzi Stonehocker, will be on display in the FWP Helena headquarters throughout this FWP Centennial Year. McDowell, who died in 1999, concluded his letter to his daughter with these words: "At the time I shot the bear I never realized how far it would go. I only feared of an attack."

Ulm Pishkun State Park Land Swap Completed

A land swap between two state agencies has joined the prehistoric bison jump at the top of Ulm Pishkun State Park with the park's visitor center at the base of the cliff.

"It's going to consolidate land between the visitor's center and the cliff," says Connie Jacobs, park manager.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation swapped 1,420 acres at the state park southwest of Great Falls. An additional 640 acres at Makoshika State Park in eastern Montana also changed hands in the deal, which was completed June 26.

At Ulm Pishkun, DNRC gave FWP 788 acres at an appraised value of $118,080. In return, FWP gave DNRC 632 acres valued at $101,120. In order to balance the acres and value, FWP bought a section of land from Dawson County and gave it to DNRC. Then DNRC gave FWP mineral rights for another section of land within Makoshika.

FWP PHOTO

A land exchange at Ulm Pishkun State Park southwest of Great Falls has consolidated FWP's land holdings.

Before the land exchange, DNRC owned the mile-and-a-half cliff face over which prehistoric peoples drove bison, while FWP owned approximately two sections of prairie land at the base of the cliff. Since the early 1970s FWP had operated a portion of the cliff as part of the park under a recreation easement with DNRC. Now, FWP essentially owns the entire cliff face as well as the land at the base.

"With our ability to remove internal fences," Jacobs says, "we will be able to give the visitor a better experience of the vastness of the prairie."

Future park plans call for extending hiking trails from the visitor's center to the top of the cliff, and returning to native prairie a portion of the DNRC land that was leased to farming.

Fort Peck: Treasure of the Plains

As "the largest hydraulic fill dam in the world," one of the more unusual claims to fame, Fort Peck Reservoir and its surroundings are considered a treasure of the plains. Fishing, recreation, and new development continue to showcase Fort Peck as a bright spot in northeastern Montana.

Fort Peck Lake draws a lot of attention from anglers, ranking first in Montana for angling pressure during summer and second only to Canyon Ferry near Helena for year-long pressure. Fort Peck has established itself as a premier walleye reservoir, producing fish to meet anyone's standards. For example, the top three teams during the 2000 Montana Governor's Cup Walleye Tournament averaged 49.4 pounds for the two-day event, which has a five fish per day bag limit.

For diversity, the reservoir offers smallmouth bass, lake trout, chinook salmon, and northern pike. Everyone has a favorite. Overall, the lake's forage

TODD GLASER

A premier walleye fishery, Fort Peck Lake also offers excellent fishing for smallmouth bass, lake trout, and northern pike.

base is in good shape, with cisco and yellow perch the preferred prey.

Fort Peck Lake provides many camping opportunities. Visitors can "rough it" at numerous recreation areas around the lake or camp in near-luxury at Kiwanis Park, just downstream from the powerhouse. Kiwanis Park is a well-kept, full-service campground maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. The asphalt walking/bike path offers a quiet morning stroll with plenty of birds and wildlife to view. Kids also have a well-stocked trout pond to fish. Giant trees shade the playground equipment, horseshoe pits, shelter houses, and barbecue pits available to complete a great family outing.

The Pines Recreation Area on the rolling plains northwest of the lake, with its 75 cabins nestled in the evergreens, also offers a refreshing retreat. A summer hotspot, this oasis also draws hunters in fall and winter. The largest elk population in eastern Montana is found close by and hunters watch the mail each fall in anticipation of drawing a tag.

The Fort Peck Lake area, with the help of anglers throughout the state and many determined local residents, is close to seeing the dream of a warmwater fish hatchery become a reality. If federal funding comes through as promised, hatchery construction will begin in 2003.

Construction also gets underway this September on the Fort Peck Interpretive Center, a learning facility and museum for all of northeastern Montana. With over 200,000 visitors to Fort Peck last year—a year-over-year increase of 21 percent—the center is destined to become a welcome and interesting attraction. The facility will house the "Peck's Rex," a large T- Rex dinosaur found in McCone County. A total of $6 million has been appropriated for the facility and four federal agencies have committed to providing information and displays.

Fort Peck may seem to be an intimidating drive from some parts of the state, but it is a rewarding getaway—a little wind, dramatic weather, and solitude. It is Montana's very own treasure and yes, it is in eastern Montana.—*Todd Glaser, information officer, Conservation Education Division, Glasgow*

Web Site Offers Training on Trout

The new "Bull Trout Identification and Education Program on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Web site (fwp.state.mt.us/bulltroutid/) gives you knowledge about trout habitat and ecology that will amaze your friends, while it prepares you to identify native bull trout and other species.

Can you name Montana's largest native trout? What did the record angler-caught bull trout weigh in Montana? In Idaho? Can you tell the difference between bull trout, lake trout, brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and westslope cutthroat trout?

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSEPH TOMELLERI

You will have these answers and more after going through the pre-test, training session, and post-test. If you pass the bull trout identification post-test, you can print out a certificate of completion that proclaims your knowledge and standing as a "quasi-expert" on bull trout.

The Web site features beautiful, state-of-the-art color illustrations by renowned artist Joe Tomelleri, and over 100 color photos of bull trout, other native and introduced fish species, and their habitats. It is a virtual scenic trip through Montana's trout country.

Why bull trout? Bull trout are a Montana Species of Special Concern, and they are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. For thousands of years bull trout traveled some of the longest migration routes of any trout in North America. Once common throughout the Pacific Northwest, bull trout now live in reduced numbers in five western states and two Canadian provinces. The new education program celebrates bull trout as an important part of Montana's natural resource heritage.

Managers have made bull trout fishing off limits to help the recovery of this sensitive species. It is legal to fish for bull trout only in Swan Lake, where bull trout populations are strong. Where it's illegal to fish for bull trout, anglers sometimes keep them by mistake, thinking they've caught a brook trout, brown trout, or lake trout. Also, anglers are often unaware that bull trout are so widely distributed in western Montana. FWP and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' goal is to improve anglers' ability to identify bull trout and to reduce the incidence of unintentional taking of bull trout.

The Web site was completed as part of the state and tribes' Fisheries Co-management Plan on the Flathead Lake and River system. The Co-management Plan emphasizes water quality, habitat, and native fish conservation. The site supplements the bull trout education and protection program in the Clark Fork drainage in Montana and Idaho.

Cooperators on the project, in addition to FWP, included: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Avista Corporation; Idaho Trout Unlimited; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; and the U.S. Forest Service. Site development by the University of Montana Information Technology Center's Digital Information Group models the recently released bear identification site on FWP's Web site.

The Bull Trout Identification and Education Program will challenge you to identify beautiful shots of some of Montana's most popular trout. While you're on this virtual fishing trip, you'll gain knowledge of Montana's trout and their habitat and become a more responsible angler.—*John Fraley, information officer, Conservation Education Division, Kalispell*

Bookshelf

DECOYS AND PROVEN METHODS FOR USING THEM, by Wade Bourne, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., One Waterfowl Way, Memphis TN 38120; 2000, 232 pages, hard cover, $24.50 (to order, call 800-45-DUCKS, or visit www.ducks.org).

A comprehensive guidebook to waterfowl decoys and duck and goose hunting layouts, this is the first book in many years to offer new methods for luring waterfowl into shotgun range. Written by passionate waterfowler Wade Bourne, it includes ideas and techniques from many experts across the country. Chapters include history and evolution of decoys, types and styles of decoys, duck spreads, goose spreads, movement, decoy rigging, and tips on care and repair. "For hunters," says Bourne, "there is some undefinable magic in luring wildfowl close over a well-placed decoy spread." Whether you hunt the tight confines of southern swamps, the big water of northern lakes, or the wide-open vistas of prairie grainfields, his book is a perfect road map to help you share that magic.

FLY FISHING THE YELLOWSTONE IN THE PARK, by Bob Jacklin and Gary LaFontaine, Greycliff Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1273, Helena, MT 59624-1273; 2001, 113 pages, soft cover, $12.95 (to order, call 800-874-4171 or visit www.greycliff.com).

Yellowstone National Park may be best known for its scenery and wildlife, but flyfishermen are most attracted to its aquatic wonders, especially the Yellowstone River. Fishing the Yellowstone can be tricky though, depending on the season and conditions. The big cutthroats it harbors can seem downright picky—unless you know how to fish for them. West Yellowstone guide and fly shop owner Bob Jacklin and Montana author Gary LaFontaine know the Yellowstone's fish, its insects, its flies, and its moods as well as anyone, and share their secrets in this book. Included are a hatch chart, a list of popular flies, and a wealth of information on where and how to fish the river.

BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT, by E. Donnall Thomas Jr., Ducks Unlimited, Inc., One Waterfowl Way, Memphis, TN 38120; 2001, 200 pages, pen-and-ink drawings by Harold Roe, hard cover, $24.50 (to order, call 800-45-DUCKS or visit www.ducks.org).

If you like waterfowling, you'll like this collection of stories by well-traveled writer E. Donnall Thomas Jr. Settings include prairie marshes in Montana, tidal flats in Alaska, lakes in the Columbia Basin, stubblefields in southeastern Colorado, and even a stock pond in New Zealand. The geography may vary, but a common thread runs throughout: that magical time of day when, for waterfowlers, there is "an all but uncontainable sense of excitement in the air." There are stories of a boy's first duck hunt, a daughter's initiation into hunting geese, adventures on a hidden prairie lake, and remarkable retrieves by a succession of Labs. Illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings by talented artist Harold Roe, this is a book that every waterfowler will want to buy and keep.

GOLDENS FOREVER: A HEARTWARMING CELEBRATION OF THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER, Todd R. Berger, Editor, Voyageur Press, 123 N. Second St., Stillwater, MN 55082; 2001, 160 pages, 90 color photographs, hard cover, $29.95 (to order, call 800-888-9653 or visit www.voyageurpress.com).

This collection of stories, color photographs, and artwork captures both the hard-working and playful sides of one of America's most popular dogs, the golden retriever. You'll read about a dog aptly named Clue, who helps solve a mystery; Willie, who can detect epileptic seizures; and Cody, who hunts pheasants in Montana. A supreme tribute to a breed that commands the admiration of people from all walks of life, *Goldens Forever* is the latest in a series of dog books from Voyageur Press's PetLife Library.

THE WILD MAMMALS OF MONTANA, by Kerry R. Foresman, The American Society of Mammalogists, 810 E. 10th St., Lawrence, KS 66044; 2001, 278 pages, soft cover, $27.95 (to order, FAX 785-843-1274 or e-mail asm@allenpress.com).

This book by long-time University of Montana biology professor Kerry R. Foresman details the taxonomy, ecology, behavior, and reproductive patterns of the 108 species of mammals currently inhabiting Montana and surrounding regions. Detailed anatomical descriptions provide information on coloration patterns, body measurements, and distinctive physical characteristics. Illustrated with 147 color and black-and-white photos, 74 drawings, and detailed distribution maps, the book is a valuable identification guide and information source for professional biologists, students, and nature enthusiasts.

Foresman has also produced a 92-page companion volume, *Key to the Mammals of Montana*. This spiral-bound, soft-cover publication contains numerous diagrams and pen-and-ink drawings by Rexford L. McGraw, III. Cross-referenced to the book, the key provides a more detailed description of the skull, dentition, and pelt of each species for use when the material is in hand. The key is available for $8 from the University of Montana Bookstore (406-243-4921).

From the Field

Auctioning for Wildlife

by Paul F. Vang

"Kind of a good one here. Let's start the bidding at a hundred dollars even money."

It's a scene common in cities and small towns across Montana, and across the nation. It's the annual Ducks Unlimited (or Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, etc.) dinner.

People have had a drink or two, bought raffle tickets, drooled over a fancy shotgun, rifle, or flyrod, and admired an elegant piece of artwork. They've made the rounds of the silent auction, had a good dinner, and they're ready for the main event: the live auction.

"One and a half, one and a half, one-seventy-five to bid."

If you take a cross-section of people attending the various conservation banquets, you'll see people attending for various reasons. Some are avid hunters or anglers who are committed to raising money to preserve and improve wildlife and fisheries habitat. Some are business people who make a point of supporting community activities. In an election year, there are likely to be a few politicians present. Above all, Montanans love a party, and the annual rod and gun club or habitat organization dinner is often one of the highlights of the year.

"Did I mention Visa and MasterCard?"

A familiar face at habitat dinners and auctions across much of Montana is Mark Anderson. At age 42, he's a 22-year veteran of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' corps of game wardens. Anderson, a native of Belt, Montana, began his career with FWP in Bozeman, and after an assignment in Harlowton, transferred to Dillon in 1985. Anderson and his wife, Kerri, have two daughters.

Anderson loves his family and his work as a game warden, but on many nights and weekends throughout the year he volunteers all-too-rare spare time to be an auctioneer at banquets. With the help of regular Dillon-based sidekicks, Rick Later, a car salesman and brand inspector, and Monte Hankinson, a guide and outfitter, Anderson has helped organizations raise over a million dollars for wildlife habitat.

"If you have any questions, just raise your hand. We'll explain it all to you later," deadpans Rick Later.

Anderson shied away from public speaking in the early days of his career. "Gosh, if I had to talk to some sixth-graders in Lavina, the day before I'd start feeling nervous and my stomach would be queasy." As a beginning game warden, however, he was assigned to assist a veteran Livingston game warden, Gary Ordish, in one of the occasional FWP sales of confiscated game. Ordish, now retired, was a licensed auctioneer and did game sales for FWP, as well as occasional weekend auctions as a sideline.

"I'd helped Gary a few times and didn't think anything of it," Anderson recalls. "Then, out of the blue one night, he called me up to say he'd bought me a scholarship to the Western College of Auctioneering in Billings."

"You did what?" Anderson asked. "Well, I hemmed and hawed about this for close to a year, until Gary finally said, 'Mark, you're going.'"

"This is a bigger, better deal."

In March 1982, Anderson successfully completed the auctioneering course and after getting his state license conducted a few game sales. His first fundraising auction was helping Ordish at a Safari Club dinner in Billings.

"Hold it! Hold it! The girl doesn't go with the flyrod," jokes Rick Later.

"That's right, Rick. The girl doesn't go."

From that beginning, Anderson has become a leading auctioneer for wildlife and habitat organizations. The list of organizations is almost a complete list of such organizations operating in Montana, including Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Safari Club International, National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitehall Sportsmen, and Skyline Sportsmen of Butte. "I was going to do one with Pheasants Forever in Great Falls, but I couldn't fit it in. So, that and Walleyes Unlimited are about the only ones I can think of that I haven't worked with."

Anderson has also worked several Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation dinners in Idaho, and a couple years ago he and his crew made the national scene as one of two featured auctioneers at a national convention of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"Take a look at your accountant. He's smiling. He says, 'No problem.'"

A successful wildlife/habitat auction is no accident. It's the result of months of planning by a local committee and coordination with the auctioneer. "Getting ready," says Anderson, "is the most important part of the process."

He works with the local committee chair ahead of time to determine values of the merchandise and establish the order in which things will be sold. "We always want a very salable item to go first, to get the rhythm of the auction going," says Anderson. "Then we'll do what we call 'pitch and carry' as we intersperse high- and low-priced items through the auction."

On banquet day, Anderson and his crew are on hand well before the crowd comes. If a representative of the national organization is on hand, Anderson will find out what similar items have sold for at other auctions, so he has a good idea of the fair market value.

PAUL VANG

FWP game warden and auctioneer Mark Anderson (center), with "ringmen" Monte Hankinson (left) and Rick Later (right).

As banquet guests start arriving, Anderson's "ringmen," Hankinson and Later, will mingle with the crowd as they look at the various auction items and try to figure out who is likely to bid on specific items. Then they'll spot them in the banquet room and be ready to pick up their bids.

"We're leanin' on him," says Later. "Good! Lean harder."

Picking up bids is an art in itself. "Some people, and I've gotten to know them, make just a quiet gesture, because they'd just as soon not let other people know they're bidding. "Rick and Monte," Anderson chuckles, "have gotten really good at picking up bids, and they think it's great when they pick up bids that I don't see. They'll give me a hard time about it."

Anderson first worked with Rick Later at a Beaverhead County sheriff's sale, and asked him to come along with him on future wildlife auctions. Later is a self-taught auctioneer, and occasionally steps in to relieve Anderson. Anderson was conducting a Ducks Unlimited dinner in Dillon when Monte Hankinson volunteered to pick up bids; he did so well Anderson asked him to join the regular team.

"It only hurts for a minute. It's all for the ducks (trout, elk, etc.)"

Auctioneers develop a personal style in their "chant." "Western," Anderson says, "teaches clarity. That's one of their trademarks."

"We have to be really clear when we're doing banquets," Anderson says. "People who go to a couple dinners a year are a lot different than someone who goes to a cattle sale every week."

"Did you say it? Did you do it?"

"I've been lucky. My family has been very supportive when I go off to do auctions." Anderson says his wife sometimes goes along to his auctions, and, with a smile, "Hopefully, soon, my daughters will go with me—and maybe help with the auction."

Anderson likes kids. Another project that he has been involved in and helped start, over 10 years ago, is "Kid's Day on the Big Hole," an annual event involving many volunteer organizations and businesses. "Kid's Day" annually gives 150 to 200 kids an exposure to fishing, fly-tying, and aquatic biology.

"Raise your sights, here."

Bidding can get hot and heavy. Anderson remembers selling an original painting for $30,000, and at a Foundation for North American Wild Sheep dinner he sold one of FWP's annual auction bighorn sheep permits for $80,000. It doesn't always work that way. He relates of one dinner, "We just couldn't get the bidding going on one item. Finally, I said to one lady, 'If I give you $5, will you take it off our hands?'"

Anderson is grateful for getting support from FWP, though he says that most of the banquets are in the spring or early fall, avoiding the heaviest workload times of the year. There are payoffs, though. "It puts me up in front of people often enough so they get to know me. After awhile," he adds, "they feel confident enough to approach me and discuss things that are bothering them."

"All in and all done. SOLD!"

The habitat and wildlife organizations are the big winners and Anderson gets a lot of satisfaction from working with them.

Steve Bayless, regional director for Ducks Unlimited in Montana, has worked with Anderson many times over the years. He remembers when Anderson helped organize a Ducks Unlimited committee in Harlowton, and then conducted their first auction. "Mark," he says, "is a very competent auctioneer, and he always relates well to the crowd. He's done a super job for Ducks Unlimited and wetlands conservation."

John McCarthy, upland bird project coordinator for FWP's Wildlife Division, praises the work of the habitat organizations. "We do a lot with them, from printing brochures to some pretty big projects," he says. "We partner-up with them in many ways, which makes our money go farther." Whether it's financial support or volunteer workers, the efforts of these organizations are valuable. "They're habitat oriented," says McCarthy, "and committed to long-term benefits. From the standpoint of hard work on the ground, they do a great job."

Typically, Anderson gives credit to the local volunteers. He says, "People come to these dinners to support their organization. The committee people and committee chairs do a fantastic job getting things organized. It's a wonderful deal."

Readers Respond

Nighthawk Returns for Fourth Year

I was so interested in your article on nighthawks ("Flying Toads," May/June issue). I'm enclosing a snapshot of one in our backyard. He or she has returned each June for the last three years. We don't know their lifespan. We are waiting this June for the return. Oh—we never heard of them being called "flying toads."

Keep up the wonderful magazine and all the pictures.—*Helen Joyce, St. Marie*

About two weeks ago I wrote you about a nighthawk returning to our backyard tree and sent you a picture. Guess what! It has returned again, June 15. This is the fourth year. We are so excited about it!—*Helen Joyce, St. Marie*

We're glad to hear the nighthawk is enjoying your hospitality for another year. We forwarded your letter to Ellen Horowitz, author of the nighthawk article, for reply. Here's her response: "I don't know the average lifespan, but I located one reference for a nighthawk living nine years. It's difficult to know if the same bird returns to Ms. Joyce's backyard. Some species of birds have high nest site fidelity while others merely take advantage of suitable habitat. Whatever the case, I share her excitement of nighthawks and the sound of summer." —Editor

Moose Newsletter Available

I'm a retired wildlife biologist who moved to Troy, Montana, last summer. One of my major interests and professional involvements has been the moose. The North American Moose Conference group (a.k.a. the moose group) not only publishes the journal *Alces*, but also a twice-a-year newsletter ("The Moose Call") intended to inform both professionals and the public of information regarding moose and other species that share their habitats. We have been trying to get word of the newsletter to more of the public interested in the moose and I was wondering if you would include a short notice about it.

"The Moose Call" is intended to promote communication between biologists and the public regarding moose biology, habitat, management, and research. It also promotes the sustainable use of moose for hunting and ecotourism, as well as educational, scientific, economic, and cultural purposes. An annual subscription ($16 U.S. or $20 Canadian) can be ordered by writing The Moose Call, c/o 1046 McIvor Ave., Winnipeg, MB Canada R2G 2J9, or by e-mailing Dr. Vince Crichton at doc.moose@home.com.—*Bill Peterson, Troy*

Ruffed Grouse Society Seeks Input

The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS), a national organization devoted to ruffed grouse conservation, would like to assess the potential for forming a Montana chapter. Lou George, director of field operations for the western region of the society, advises me that a Montana chapter would attempt to achieve the following:

• Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on all issues related to the ruffed grouse population in Montana and habitat that supports it.

• Support academic upland bird research personnel in efforts to learn more about ruffed grouse and their habitat in Montana.

• Work to enhance habitat not only beneficial to grouse but to other wildlife as well.

I have volunteered to act as the initial clearinghouse to gather information about forming a Montana chapter of RGS and pursuing these goals. Interested individuals can reach me by writing P.O. Box 166, Livingston, MT 59047; by phoning 406-222-4919; or by e-mailing fineandfar@msn.com.—*Mitch Hurt, Livingston*

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We welcome your comments as well as letters to the editor. Please write us at: Readers Respond, Montana Outdoors, 930 West Custer Avenue, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701; fax 406-443-4619; e-mail montanaoutdoors@state.mt.us.

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ITEM #1901-4 $39.95

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With contrasting collar, cuffs, and placket, this 100% combed cotton pique golf shirt is available in *forest green/wine/navy*; *wine/forest/navy (shown)*; and *jade/concord/royal.* Comes with embroidered Montana Outdoors logo; available in sizes M, L, XL.
ITEM #1202-1 $36.95

forest green/wine/navy *wine/forest/navy* *jade/concord/royal*

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dark green/khaki *dark caramel/dark green*

Low-Profile Cap

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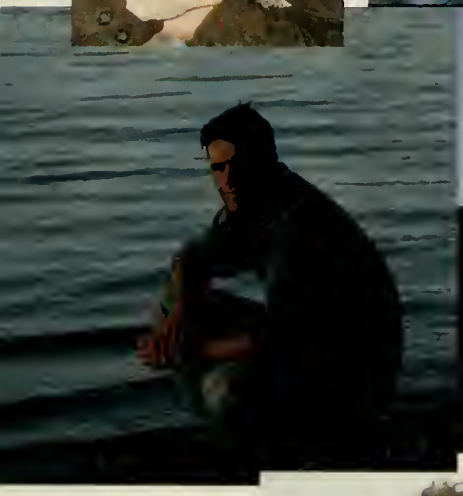

From top to bottom: Auchly, Charles, Fraley, Baumeister, Hagengruber, Thomas

BRUCE AUCHLY Hunters, wildlife watchers, and biologists are all keen observers of ring-necked pheasants. But for a unique perspective on these popular game birds, Auchly interviewed a person who sees them in all weather, at all times of year: George Golie, a road grader for Cascade County (see page 2). Also a representative in the Montana Legislature, Golie recognizes the importance of habitat, especially the Conservation Reserve Program. "Where there's CRP, there's birds," says Golie. Auchly is the information officer at FWP's office in Great Falls.

ALAN CHARLES As FWP's landowner/sportsman coordinator, he logs a lot of time on the road in autumn checking on of FWP's hunter access program. In his travels, Charles sees hunters of all ages with many different backgrounds and interests. To capture the common thread that weaves through the fabric of hunting in Montana, he suggested we do a photo essay. So we asked our photographers to submit their favorite "faces of the hunt" photos, added Charles' text, and *voila!*— "A Clan of Many Faces" beginning on page 8.

JOHN FRALEY In his job as information officer for FWP's Region 1 office in Kalispell, Fraley meets many memorable people. He's written about several of them for *Montana Outdoors*. There was, for example, Irene Wilson, the great-grandmother who graduated from Montana's Bowhunter Education Course at the age of 83. But Fraley admits that no one made a more lasting impression than Charlie Stafford, who bagged his first deer last fall at the age of 14. Charlie, born with Down's syndrome, underwent nine major surgeries as a toddler; doctors didn't think he'd survive. But now he hunts deer with his father and brothers, and has been certified as an Assistant Hunter Education Instructor. For more about this remarkable Montana hunter, turn to "Making His Mark" on page 14.

THOMAS BAUMEISTER & DAVE HAGENGRUBER Their jobs are different, but they have a common goal: getting more Montanans afield, and making sure people enjoy hunting and fishing safely and responsibly. Baumeister heads up FWP's Hunter Education Program, and Hagengruber oversees the "Family Fishing Adventures" initiative. To help celebrate FWP's Centennial, they put together the "Montana Outdoors Challenge"—a quiz that will test your knowledge of Montana's flora and fauna, hunting and fishing regulations, and state parks history. Answer the questions correctly and you'll have a chance to win some fabulous prizes—see page 17 for contest details.

E. DONNALL THOMAS JR. "If there were any justice," he says, "September would have sixty, or a hundred, days." For avid anglers and hunters, September can be maddeningly short (see page 22). There are trout to be caught, hunting dogs to be placated, grouse and partridge to be chased. And of course there is bow season—"There is no way for me to deal with September in Montana without having to deal with elk," confesses Thomas. Squeeze it all in if you can, he advises, but don't get too tired—October, with its ducks, pheasants, and whitetails, is close behind.

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